

Vale - Bill Browne (by Tony Browne)

Bill Browne recently passed away at the age of 87. He was a secretary and long-term member of the club and he loved serving the members and becoming friends with many of you.

Bill was born and schooled in Perth before moving with his family to Adelaide in 1950 where he completed National Service and participated in all forms of motorcycle racing.

He bought a 500 AJS from British Motorcycle Sales in May 1952 and joined the Ariel Motor Cycle Club where he took part in trials, road racing and motocross. A friend, Alan Wallis built alloy guards and struts on the AJS for competition works.

In 1955 Bill was invited to ride a 55' 350 compo AJS prepared in England for the 1955 trials season. Together with John Toolan and Ken Darwin's sidecar, they won all major trials and team trophies in that season. At the end of that season, he toyed with the idea of going to London to ride motorbikes with a mate. He chose to devote his time to studying and working and married Margaret White in 1957.

His mate did go and went by boat taking over 3 months to get there and working onboard to pay for his ticket. He eventually became a session rider for Japanese companies like Honda, Kawasaki etc.

Bill Graduated in 1958 as a licensed surveyor and was involved in many projects including the creation of many irrigated fruit blocks along the Murray River and the Pichie Richie Rail Pass

Bill moved in to his own practice, Mosel Browne and Associates for 26 years during which time he was responsible for surveying the land of Port Stanvac Oil refinery (now the desal plant), Chrysler Factory at Tonsley (was Mitsubishi) and their foundry at Lonsdale. Also, the Olympic Dam mining precinct and the township of Roxby Downs amongst numerous other major landmarks around SA.

Perhaps his crowning moments came when he was asked to be Donald Campell's surveyor for his 2 attempts at the world land speed record on Lake Eyre.

Bill had previously assisted Mel McEwan in his Australian land speed record on Lake Eyre and created the track that was to become so famous with Donald Campbell.



Bill riding in The Advertiser 24-hour Trial on Menglers Hill in 1955



Bill in 1953 on an Ariel Club Run with what is believed to be AJS bikes and a Fiat

Vale - Bill Browne (cont)

Unfortunately, Donald's first attempt in 1962 was eventually washed out with the first rains in that area for over 10 years but on return in 1964 he was successful in achieving an average mile speed of 403.1 mph (648.7kph).

During his time in surveying the course, Bill became good friends with Donald and was even allowed to drive his test vehicle at times. (See adjacent photo).

He was also allowed to stay on the salt on occasions in Donald's personal caravan and became his trusted co-pilot while flying in from their base at a nearby station each day.

It was this experience that encouraged Bill to obtain his light aircraft pilot's licence which he used extensively around SA to run his business as mentioned previously.

Upon retiring in 1986 and remarrying, he and Margaret went into property development and built a two-story home and apartment and started the Blue Fin Apartments at Port Hughes as well as the Blue Fin Fishing Charters which was only the second fishing charter operator in SA at the time. Both were very successful and Port Hughes is now a bustling centre of fishing and fishing charters.

As Marg became ill, they sold the businesses and moved to Coobowie for a quiet life but Marg passed away in 2001 and he eventually rekindled an old friendship with Margaret Piper who he married in 2003.

Margaret sourced a 1965 Matchless motorcycle which he lovingly restored over many years using only original parts and rode in rallies for many years until his health failed him.

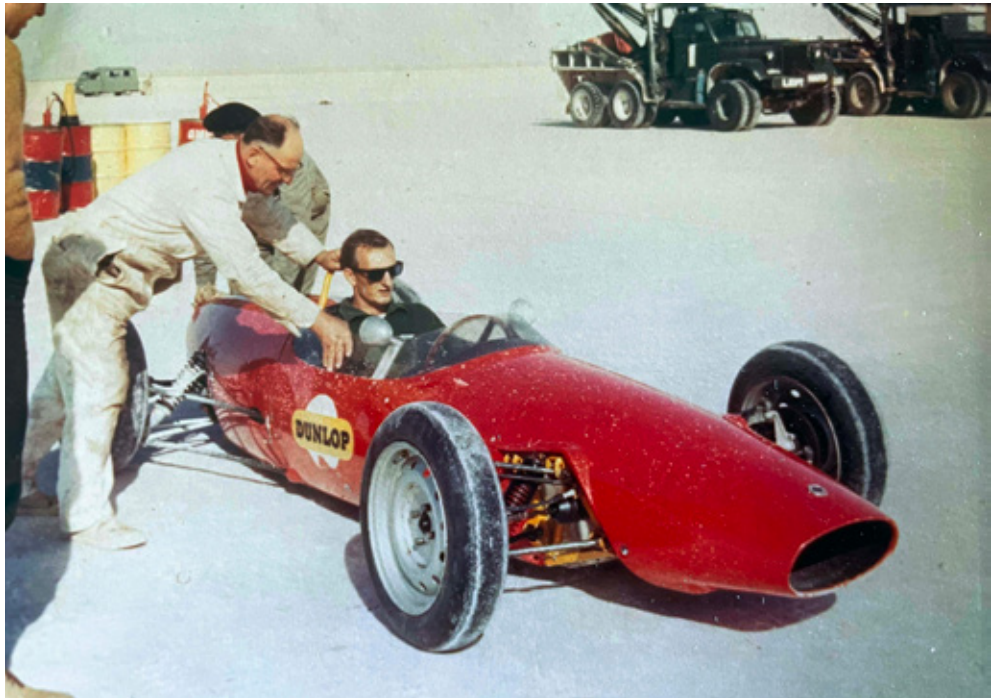
The bike was displayed in the Birdwood Motor Museum for some time and there is a photo of the bike (adjacent) with his 1962 Jag behind.

Bill is survived by Margaret, his 2 children Tony and Marianne as well as 5 step children and 9 grandchildren.

Any person who came into contact with Bill became a friend for life and he valued the friendships from all areas of life.

Tony Browne

Bill's 2005 S-Type 3.0 litre V6 that he owned for 10 years and that he had to reluctantly sell due to declining health.



Bill taking Donald Campbells test vehicle for a drive on the Land Speed Record Course



Bills fully restored 1965 Matchless motorcycle together with his 1962 Mark II Jaguar.



Bill Browne—Jaguar MK 2 3.8.

My interest in Jaguars started in 1951, my last year at school, one of my class mates was allowed to drive the family Jag MK IV Drophead to school on occasions.

WE would pile into the Jag after school and drive from South Perth over the Causeway and down St Georges Terrace—pure luxury.

Over the years I have yearned to own a Mark 2 and after I retired a 1955 Twin Matchless Motor Cycle. When that was completed, Margaret decided I needed another project to keep me out of her hair and so the search for a suitable Jag began.

After driving and looking at many Mark 2s we finally found this one that was beautifully restored inside and outside but needed some TLC underneath.

The car was originally owned by a woman living in Heidelberg, Victoria and was acquired by Max Gransden who lived at Brighton, Victoria and then at Somerton Park South Australia. Max did a lot of restoration and eventually sold it to Trevor Merkel of Happy Valley, South Australia.

After it changed hands a couple more times we eventually purchased our pride and joy.

Trevor Merkel contacted us some time later to see if we would like the history file with all receipts dating back to the 1980's which we were very pleased to have.

The car has been in the Jaguar Car Club of Victoria and also the Sporting Car Club of SA.

Bill and Margaret also own a lovely S TYPE seen in the photo below—Ed.

